

Towcester Farm Vets

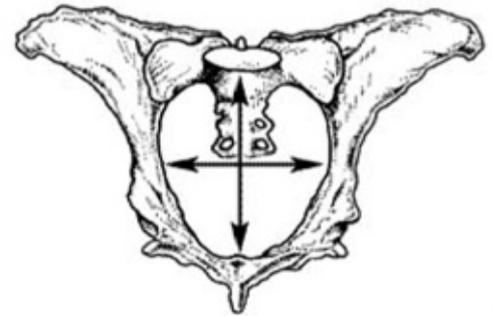


SPRING 2019

NEWSLETTER

Pelvic Scoring in Heifers

Heifers are often the most problematic individuals during calving, most commonly due to a mismatch in the size of the calf and the dam's pelvis. By measuring a heifer's pelvic area before she is put to the bull we can avoid the complications this mismatch creates. Pelvic measuring should ideally be performed at 13 months of age, but anywhere from 11 – 24 months is fine with some more complicated maths at our end. The calculations allow us to predict the estimated pelvic area at 2 years of age and, more importantly, whether she will be able to deliver an average sized calf for your farm with little or no problem.



We are currently working with clients who have used pelvic scoring over the last couple of years to see if our expectations are being met. So far we are pleased to say the data supports the theory that animals with pelvic areas below the cut off have had more calving issues. Going forward we would obviously hope to be confident enough to rule these heifers out of the breeding group all together, before they even get to cause a problem.

If you would be interested in measuring your next batch of bulling heifers please call the office to book an appointment.

AHDB calls for farmers to #Shoutaboutthesire

New Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) that are linked to the traits that you get paid for, such as carcase quality and speed of finishing, have been developed and are now available to producers to help with breeding decisions. Using this new data will drive genetic improvement for carcase traits.

In order for a bull to have these EBVs available, their calves must have sire details recorded on their BCMS passports. Without this information, any data relating to the bull is meaningless as his progeny cannot be identified at slaughter.

AHDB are now encouraging farmers to share the message and shout about the sire. You can find the new EBVs here: <http://egenes.co.uk/carcassdata/>

Snippets for Spring:

- Whilst we hope everyone's Spring goes according to plan, we're always on the end of the phone if it doesn't. If abortions are a problem, we encourage the submission of lambs (or calves) AND placenta early on so we can try to reach a diagnosis. Please be aware we don't get an answer from all enquiries so it is worth bringing down a few submissions if the problem persists.
- We have lots of pain relief options available for sheep and cattle to help new mums feel happier and look after the new arrival to the best of their ability! We always encourage people to keep a bottle on farm but we are also happy to put up individual doses so please give us a call about keeping the ladies pain free!
- And a quick reminder about castration:
 - Rubber rings can only be used in the first week of life.
 - Burdizzo castration can be carried out on farm in calves up to 2 months of age.
 - After two months in calves and three months in lambs, only a vet can legally perform castrations.



Bull Fertility

Now is the time to be thinking about performing a bull MOT before he gets to work again. It is estimated that 20% of bulls have reduced semen quality (subfertility) with a further 5-10% being completely infertile. Subfertility can mean a prolonged calving period, increasing the risk of calf diseases like scour and pneumonia and the associated reduced growth rates and unappealing variations across the group.

Pre-breeding bull fertility checks cover general physical health, measurements of scrotal circumference, palpation of internal accessory sex organs and microscopic examination

of a semen sample collected by the use of our electro-ejaculator. This should be performed 6-9 weeks before the start of the service period allowing time for retesting or, in the worst case scenario, to source a new bull.

Stock bulls should be tested annually as there is no guarantee that a bull will remain fertile from one year to the next. New bulls should not be left out and pre-purchase bull fertility tests are strongly advised to ensure your costly new purchase is fit for the job he is intended for.

Bulls need to be adequately restrained in a crush with good access underneath to allow for semen collection. The ejaculator is battery powered but we need a nearby power point for the microscope, ideally protected from the weather, as semen and rain are a bad combo!

Please contact the office if you wish to book an appointment.

Supporting the **#ColostrumIsGold** campaign

Lambing and calving are well underway and the team are always delighted to see our farmers diligently collecting colostrum with clean hands into a clean container to give to the new arrival.

Colostrum is essential for calves, lambs and crias and should be given as close to birth as possible. The longer the wait, the bigger the risk of watery mouth, scour, sepsis, navel ill, joint ill, pneumonia... the list is endless! Animals that receive good volumes of good quality colostrum at the right time have better health, lower death rates, higher daily live weight gains and reduced antibiotic use over their lifetime.

As a rule of thumb, calves require 10% of their bodyweight (usually around 3-4L) in the first 4-6 hours of life. Lambs require 50ml/kg liveweight within 2 hours of birth and a total of 200ml/kg liveweight within the first 24 hours.

Whilst quantity is important, quality plays a big part too – youngsters born to a dam with poor quality colostrum will obviously need increased volumes to achieve the same level of protection. We are seeing more clients using refractometers and colostrometers for quick and easy quality measurements on farm, providing peace of mind that the youngster gets the best start. We are all very happy to talk through how to use these devices on farm so please just ask!

Becca's maternity leave

As you may be aware, Becca has now headed off on maternity leave to get some well earned rest before the arrival of her first born. With her calving date, sorry, due date fast approaching, we all wish her well and look forward to filling you in on the arrival in the next newsletter!

NEWSFLASH: Unfortunately, there is currently a manufacturing issue with Adrencaine meaning that we cannot get hold of it, or any other alternatives licensed for use in cattle. Rest assured that we are doing our best to source other products but in the meantime we will have to restrict the use of our supplies for emergency surgeries by vets and will be unable to sell any for disbudding. We will obviously let everyone know as soon as the situation changes.